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POLICY ISSUES

The role of women in environment and development

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with Governing Council decision 17/4, describes the action taken by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to implement the recommendations of that decision. It also notes UNEP input into preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

(a) Take note with appreciation of the Executive Director's report;

(b) Endorse the proposals for UNEP's contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women;

(c) Encourage the finalization of the Policy Statement on Gender and Environment as an important contribution to the Conference and to the world community;

(d) Welcome the Executive Director's internal goals for achieving gender balance in UNEP at all Professional levels;

(e) Request Governments to assist the Executive Director in achieving these goals by proposing well-qualified women for vacancies announced to Governments;

(f) Welcome and endorse the Executive Director's intention to integrate gender attention and gender balance fully into the work and activities of UNEP;

(g) Request the Executive Director to report to the Council at its nineteenth session on implementation of this decision.

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* UNEP/GC.18/1.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

1. The United Nations Environment Programme has demonstrated leadership regarding the role of women in environment and development within the United Nations. This has been accomplished through aggressive pursuit of, and documented actions and responsiveness to, the mandate that the recommendations of Governing Council decision 17/4 be implemented.

2. Specific responses to the Governing Council's requests have been:

(a) Ensuring that gender considerations are well integrated into all policies, programmes and activities of UNEP, by:

- Developing gender impact assessment criteria to ensure optimal incorporation of gender considerations into the design and implementation of UNEP activities. A set of guidelines and a checklist are being prepared and training will be provided with a view to ensuring that gender sensitivity is reflected in all aspects of UNEP;

- Forging a coordinated and comprehensive partnership of ad hoc women's groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), internal and external to Gigiri. These groups have been restructured into cohesive and action-oriented partnerships with common goals. Examples are: externally, with focal points for women at the secretariat and inter-agency level; and internally, with policy, outreach, and UNEP staff;

- Striving towards a 50/50 gender balance, taking into account available staff and geographical representation, in all senior advisory and policy-making joint statutory committees within UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat), while maintaining the highest standards of efficiency;

- Issuing a formal request to Governments, soliciting their support in submitting and identifying qualified senior and executive female candidates for UNEP/UNCHS (Habitat) and Secretariat-wide candidacy consideration. The response has resulted in the identification of nearly 100 candidates (75 per cent with advanced degrees), encompassing 67 professional and scientific occupations;

- Developing and submitting a comprehensive Gender Issues Plan of Action and Milestones to the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), New York, which motivated the Secretariat to adopt officially a series of those initiatives;

(b) Establishing specific targets for an increase in the number of women employed within the existing staff positions in UNEP at all Professional levels, both at headquarters and in the field, by:

- Announcing that every effort be made to cooperate with the Secretary-General in attaining the target of having 35 per cent of regular budget posts being filled by women and that attempts also be made to reach the same target for all posts in UNEP, including project posts financed from the Environment Fund. To date, the Executive Director has increased the number of women in Professional and Director-level posts by 26.5 per cent since 1992, resulting in an overall increase of women in those categories from 26 to 30 per cent of total Professional posts;

- Ensuring UNEP's reputation becomes that of one of the most successful employers of women at Professional levels in the United Nations (see table below);

UNEP staff by gender and grade for the period 1992-1994
(as at 31 December)

Grade	USG	ASG	D2	D1	P5	P4	P3	P2	P1	Total
1992 # of Women	0	0	1	3	10	18	26	22	3	83
1994 # of Women	1	0	2	2	13	31	25	27	4	105
% Change	100%	0%	100%	(33)%	30%	72%	(4)%	23%	25%	26.5%
1992 # of Men	1	1	12	29	52	69	80	47	8	299
1994 # of Men	0	0	10	29	48	75	51	29	3	245
% Change	(100) %	(100) %	(17)%	0%	(6)%	7%	(36)%	38%	(62.5)%	(18)%

- Mandating the Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) to seek aggressive ways and means to recruit qualified female applicants and to submit such application, for equal consideration in the competitive process, to appointment and promotion boards and committees;

- Piloting and instituting innovative methods to encourage recruitment for women, e.g. job-sharing, spouse employment, special post allowance (SPA), rotational training and developmental assignments for women staff members at headquarters and from regional offices at both General Service and Professional levels;

- Preparing and distributing the career development and rotational survey, targeted to identify the concerns and aspirations of UNEP female staff and currently being analysed by HRMS;

- Endorsing and supporting initiatives to promote qualified and eligible women from General Service to Professional ranks;

(c) Intensifying and expanding coordination and cooperation between UNEP and other multilateral organizations in the area of training in gender issues and sustainable development, by;

- Completing initial management training for UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) staff, in coordination with OHRM, New York, for mid-level managers at Headquarters and in Geneva, also addressing gender issues;

- Establishing a gender review board to report and recommend action to the Executive Director, through the Director for Policy Development. The board also monitors the implementation of all measure to further gender sensitivity, gender equity and policy development;

- Participating in and co-sponsoring the United Nations inter-agency and NGO observance of International Women's Day;

- Participating in the World Summit for Social Development, in Copenhagen (6-12 March 1995);

- Meeting with NGOs and incorporating their concerns into the policies, programmes, and activities of UNEP.

3. The Executive Director was also requested to prepare concrete proposals for the integration of women and environment into the process of sustainable development as the contribution of UNEP to the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in 1995. This request has been complied with by:

- Participating in most of the five regional meetings in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, including in the final preparatory meeting, held in New York from 15 March to 4 April 1995;

- Advocating the inclusion of an environmental component into a Platform for Action, to include a review and appraisal of the advancement of women, based on the objectives laid out in the Nairobi Forward-looking strategies, adopted in 1985. UNEP provided input to the review exercise, focusing on the role of women and gender issues in the management of natural resources;

- Contributing to and coordinating the preparation of technical papers on thematic areas of women, environment and sustainable development (drinking water and sanitation; land tenure and food security; sustainable shelter; women and disaster management; energy and forestry; and environment, policy analysis and support training);

- Identifying ten critical areas of concern to be a blueprint of what will be adopted by Governments as a major outcome of the Beijing Conference. The ten areas identified as obstacles to the advancement of women in the world comprise: poverty; education and health; violence; armed and other conflicts; economic disparity; politics; national and international institutions; human rights; mass media; environment and development;

- Developing a Policy Statement on Gender and Environment, including an analysis of the impact of the environment on men and women and their relationships to the environment in various socio-economic contexts. This will be a major part of UNEP's contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, scheduled to take place in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995;

- Organizing an international seminar, from 10 to 13 April 1995, on "Gender and environment", to be held at Nairobi headquarters. The seminar will provide the opportunity to review and refine UNEP's Policy Statement on Gender and Environment as well as the proposed

gender impact assessment, in preparation for Beijing. Additionally, the seminar will produce a publication entitled "Gender and Environment", which will be made available to participants in the Beijing Conference;

- Developing a joint programme with international NGOs, such as the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), for the Beijing NGO Forum on Women '95, which will be held in Beijing from 30 August through 8 September 1995;

- Developing an eight-day programme focusing on the relationship between gender, environment and development in the context of desertification control, forest management, biodiversity protection, technology cooperation, and others. The programme will form part of the "Environment and Development Tent";

- Participating in the International Conference on Population and Development, in Cairo (5-13 September 1994).

4. The Executive Director was further requested to enhance the cooperation between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) in integrating women in comprehensive programmes for sustainable development. This was complied with by:

- UNEP and UNCHS regularly participating in and contributing to meetings on gender-related issues such as the International Seminar on Gender and the Environment, Nairobi, 10-13 April 1995;

- Completing a joint training programme on gender issues for the Executive Committees of both UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat).